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RETAIL PRODUCE MANUAL

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ORGANIZATION OF THE WORK AREA FOR HANDLING PRODUCE IN RETAIL STORES

MARKETING BULLETIN NO. 2
Agricultural Marketing Service and
Federal Extension Service
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Copies of this publication may be purchased from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington 25, D.C. The price per copy is 15 cents. In quantities of 100 copies or more, this price per copy is discounted 25 percent. Cash, or money order, should accompany your order to the Superintendent of Documents.

November 1959

This is the first of a group of bulletins that the Department will issue on handling produce in retail stores. Together the bulletins make up a "Retail Produce Manual."

The bulletins, which can be inserted in a 3-ring binder, present step-by-step instructions that will help retail store managers and workers save time and money in produce handling and will enable them to offer consumers produce of better quality with less loss from waste and spoilage. The publications in this group will also be helpful to specialists of the Cooperative Extension Service and State Departments of Agriculture in their marketing work with retail stores. These bulletins summarize the results of recent research by the Agricultural Marketing Service looking toward improvement in handling of produce in retail stores. The research is part of a broad program to improve efficiency in marketing of agricultural products, reduce marketing costs, and expand markets for farm products.

The retail store operator is the last link in the long chain of produce handlers and is the only person with whom the consumer has direct contact. Unless the retailer offers fresh produce in a satisfactory manner to the consumer, direct or indirect losses may reflect back through each handler to the growers.

This publication was prepared with the assistance of Supermarket News, New York, N. Y.

DO YOU WANT TO IMPROVE YOUR DEPARTMENT?

This Manual Tells You How.

It provides the latest information
about operating a produce department.

Information in this manual
is based on U. S. Department
of Agriculture marketing
research. A publication for
reference is cited in each
section of the manual.



If you follow these procedures better produce at less cost
will result. Several firms have applied these operating
procedures to their departments and achieved better sales,
greater profit, and lower operating costs.

Save labor

Save overhead

Reduce shrink

Increase sales

Make profit

Produce departments of several firms were
subjected to intense study by the U. S.
Department of Agriculture personnel. The
studies were conducted and checked in
hundreds of supermarkets throughout the
United States. They included analysis of
various work methods, and evaluation of
operating procedures, record systems,
display arrangement, and many other factors.

Savings in operating costs and increases in
sales and gross profit have been substantial
in several leading firms.

It takes lots of "know how" to be a good produce manager. The produce manager of today's supermarket has many duties.



Much
responsibility

He must be a good manager as well as a worker. He is responsible for ordering, receiving, storing, backroom production, maintenance of and planning for displays, customer contacts, and merchandising. All these jobs must be done well to make a profit at present competitive levels. Much of the work must be done by others and, because of this, understanding of human relations is important.

Must work
through others

This manual provides a ready reference for use in improving produce operations. It includes many recent and new developments.

THE OBJECTIVES ARE:

Improve quality of produce displayed

Give customer better service

Reduce waste

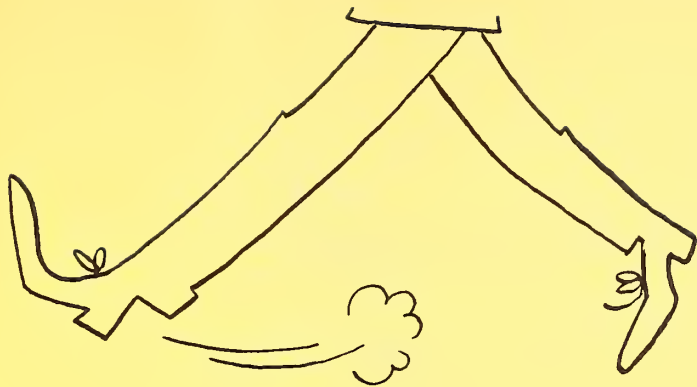
Make work easier and more satisfying

Sell more produce

Decrease costs

These objectives can best be attained by proper operating procedures. This requires proper backroom organization, ordering and control, display procedures and work methods in addition to merchandising knowledge.

Bring Yourself up to Date!



THE FIRST STEP

Reorganize your backroom - time and neglect affect us all.

Has Your Produce Backroom Suffered?

Produce backrooms tend to collect unneeded materials and equipment through accumulation and changes.

Improvements in handling of produce before it reaches retail have reduced store processing required. As a result, some backroom equipment becomes obsolete. New methods of preparation for sale and policy changes of the various companies also contribute. In addition there is a tendency to collect old materials, making house cleaning necessary from time to time.

Backrooms become
outdated

It's time to
clean house

Look over your department.

See What is Needed for Today's Operations!

The produce department head should review his department needs in the light of present day practices.

Take stock of present procedures for receiving, storing, and handling produce. Does the equipment and space on hand do the job? Is there unnecessary equipment? Can space be better utilized? It is well to get the assistance of the store manager and specialists or supervisors in this study. List needs and any maintenance or repair work that should be done. Make arrangements to get this done through proper channels.

Take stock

Consult your
supervisors



CHECK YOUR DEPARTMENT

Look For:

1. Adequate backroom space

Lack of
storage space

Adequate
work room

Often produce backrooms are inadequate for needed storage and production. Sometimes space is lost to other departments. Consult with other department heads and compromise where necessary. The space available is often better if temporary partitions or fences can be set up. The most important step is to reorganize and make better use of the space available.

2. Adequate aisles and passageways

Narrow doors

Jammed aisles

Bottlenecks that obstruct traffic are often caused by narrow doorways and tables and cabinets in busy areas. These obstructions prevent workers from doing their job and lead to a general slowdown of the entire department. Whatever needs to be done to widen these areas for easy passage should be done as soon as possible. Also, steps should be taken to see that nothing is placed in the areas which will again make them bottlenecks.

3. Floors all one level

Raised floors

Steps

Steps, particularly at doorways, which prevent the use of rolling equipment cause a lot of unnecessary work when heavy loads must be moved from one level to another. Ramps can be used if they are long enough but they sometimes create a safety problem.

4. Proper storage space for merchandise

Plan storage

Mark off floors

Improper and unplanned storage of merchandise is one of the greatest single wastes of time and effort in retail produce departments. Storage space should be designated and cleared for the load in advance of delivery. These storage areas, as well as the aisles leading to them, should be marked off to fit the handling equipment used. Merchandise should be moved directly into storage without rehandling. Shelves should be provided for small items.

5. Neat and orderly storage of supplies

Orderly

Keep in original package

All wrapping supplies, twistems, staples, pencils, etc., should be kept in a fixed place neatly stored so they cannot be damaged. Sheet paper and cellophane should be stored in protecting trays, open packages of poly or paper bags should be kept in separate boxes. New materials should be kept in the original package as long as possible to prevent damage. Don't open more than one package at a time. An adequate but not excessive supply of materials should be maintained. These items should be inventoried and ordered regularly.

6. Adequate tools and equipment

Storage space

Preventive maintenance

There should be an adequate but not excessive number of handtrucks, dollies, tubs, knives, garbage cans, hammers, scales and other produce equipment. The best rule is one handtruck per person working. Carts and dollies should have parking space when not in use. The department should be checked for damaged equipment and repairs instituted. A system of preventive maintenance should be started to keep equipment greased and repaired.

Keep out shopping carts

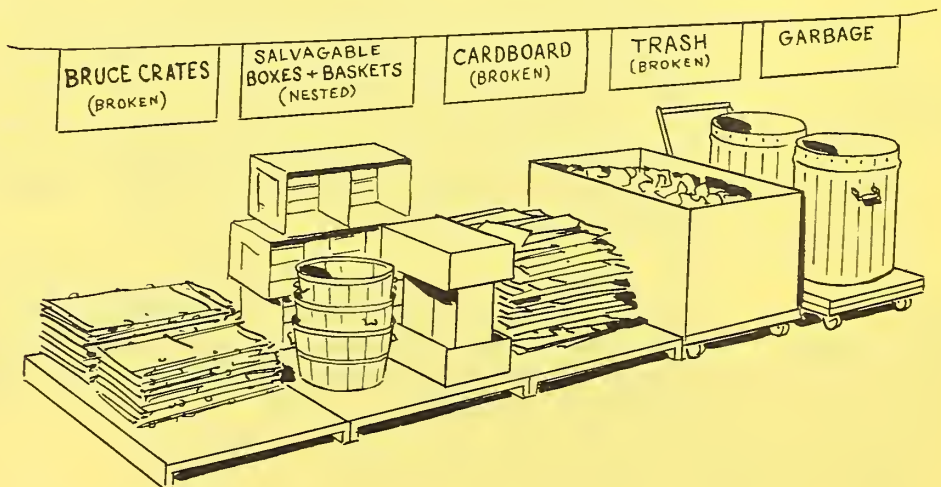
Shopping carts should be forbidden in produce backrooms. They make poor use of storage space, cause congestion, and tend to rust when used for produce. Produce stored in shopping carts is often damaged on the wire bottom.

7. Adequate properly located workplaces

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| Compact space | <p>The three most used workplaces in produce backrooms are the trimming area, the packaging and pricing workplaces, and the bagging area. Compact working areas for each operation should be provided with all the necessary materials, tools and equipment within easy reach of the operator. There should be holding space for both the unprocessed and processed product adjacent to the workplaces. Adequate trimming workplaces can often be constructed from available materials. Tables can be cut down or modified to make work stations by installing racks for holding the product at proper height and position. Bins can be added for bagging. Scales can be relocated and stands built to provide proper working height and position. The operator should not have to stand in the aisle or passageway.</p> |
| Holding shelves | |
| Out of aisles | |

8. Proper handling of salvage, waste, and garbage

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Central location | <p>One of the greatest causes of confusion in produce backrooms is leaving salvage or waste crates and boxes scattered about. Storage space or bins should be provided for all waste and salvage at the point where it collects. In a bulk produce operation this should be near the door to the sales floor. In a prepack operation it should be near the packaging stations. Boxes and crates should be collapsed or nested to conserve space and improve handling. Garbage should be collected in cans or barrels.</p> |
| Collapsed and nested | |



9. Check lighting, ventilation, and working conditions

Light Produce backrooms are noted for being dark, damp, and noisy. Good lighting improves inspection during trimming or packaging, thereby improving quality.

Temperature Proper temperature and ventilation are important in preserving quality of stored merchandise as well as productivity of clerks. A little paint and soap can have a beneficial effect on the morale of the crew.

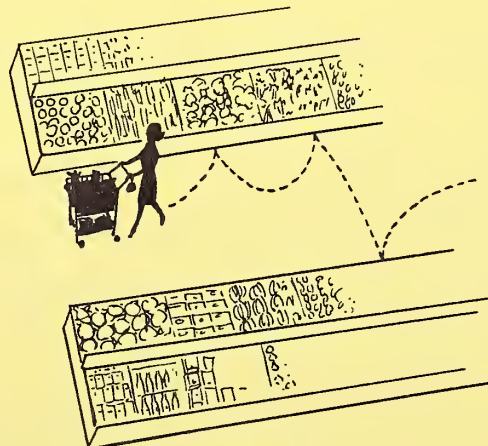
Noise Compressors or other noisy equipment can sometimes be covered or soundproofed.

10. Display area counter construction and arrangement

Eliminate unsightly dummies Style changes sometimes result in unattractive displays in older stores. Counters tend to be altered and "dummied" over a period of time. The use of plywood, paint, and a few hours of work can make decided improvements in the appearance of counters when properly done. Displays can often be rearranged to allow a smooth flow of traffic and increased selling space. Customer service scales can also be relocated to improve customer traffic patterns.

Improve traffic flow

A report containing further information on layout is now being prepared by the Wholesaling and Retailing Section, Agricultural Marketing Service.



AFTER THE SURVEY

Prepare a Plan To Get the Necessary Changes Made.

Prepare Work Orders for:

Changes in backroom

Repair of equipment

Installation of new equipment

Modification of workplaces

Program for Reorganization

Specify who,
how, and
when

Clean up backroom and display area

Rearrange storage areas

Reorganize supplies

Mark off equipment storage areas

Make plans to keep it orderly

Specify Responsibility for Different Areas and Jobs

Post Instructions and Signs

